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Duterte's Presidency: New Politics, Same Politicians

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Abstract

A new hope has sprouted from the southern part of the Philippines. Politicians outside the Manila-circle felt that they were vindicated when Duterte won the presidency. Of course, the entire nation rejoices with the coming of a “non-traditional” politician, and self-proclaimed leftist and socialist president. But the first two years of Duterte's presidency compel Filipinos to ponder what's going on with the country. Thus, this paper focuses on the incongruity of Duterte's promises with his implementing policies: first, his being leftist and socialist with neoliberal policies implemented; second, democracy with looming tyranny; third, independent-foreign policy while remaining subservient to U.S.A.; lastly, integrating Rousseau's Social Contract Theory, the country's representative democracy is dealt with the government's insensitivity to its own polity. Concluding, the paper argues that Duterte's new politics maintain, if not worsen, the socio-political economic problems he inherits from the preceding presidents.

Keywords: Duterte, democracy, neoliberal policy, Rousseau, Social Contract Theory

Introduction

Over the past years, Filipinos were no longer excited and hopeful in Philippine politics. But the idea of development in Philippine politics being inclusive and transformative under Duterte is as promising as Jesus' Second Coming. During the campaign period, he has repeatedly proclaimed himself leftist and

socialist but not communist.¹ The people from the lowest stratum of Philippine social structure feel that they have found a non-traditional politician who accompanies them in their struggles. His tough stance against foreign influence ignited the Filipinos' visions termed by Renato Constantino as 'political independence', 'economic emancipation', and 'cultural renaissance.'² With the said background, this paper posits four arguments: first, that Duterte is a neoliberal despite proclaiming himself leftist and socialist; second, that tyranny is looming under his presidency; third, that his independent foreign policy is still subservient to U.S.A.; and lastly, that democracy under his presidency steps back from becoming participatory and emancipatory.

It has been noted that: Duterte is 'unlikely to pursue socialism';³ democracy in the Philippines is tainted with autocracy;⁴ Duterte's independent foreign policy is still subservient to the U.S.;⁵ and democracy under his presidency is ironic to the many.⁶

Despite the evident paradox of Duterte's presidency, many are still silent and apathetic about its irony. Even the academic world is maintaining a considerate distance from the struggling masses against the president's anti-poor policy. Though there are quite

¹ Maricar Cinco, "Duterte: I'm a socialist, not a communist; last card," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 18, 2016.

² Renato Constantino, "The miseducation of the Filipino," *Foundation for Nationalist Studies* (1987).

³ Gabriel Hetland and Herbert Docena, "Why Duterte is unlikely to pursue socialism," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 30, 2016.

⁴ Maraiah Alexandra Hartweg, "The Nostalgia for Strongman Rule and Marcosian Politics," Bachelor's thesis, 2017.
<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/51292> (accessed September 2, 2018).

⁵ Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill 2017*, 114th Congress, 2nd Session, 2015-2016, Senate Report 114-290.

Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill 2018*, 115th Congress, 1st Session, 2017, Senate Report 115-152.

⁶ Raul Dancel, "Thousands Rally Against 'Dictator' Duterte," *The Straits Times*, Sep 22, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1941315623?accountid=47253> (accessed September 2, 2018).

growing surge of the people accounting the president of the promises he made, there is still a considerable gap between the implementing policies and the president's platform during the campaign period. To bridge the gap, this paper looks into the aforementioned points.

The Neoliberal Socialist

During the campaign period, Duterte proclaimed himself leftist and socialist.⁷ But when he became president he clarified the smoke implementing the macro-economic policy of the preceding presidents, i.e., neoliberalism.⁸ Neoliberalism has always stressed and stretched its package policy: trade and industry liberalization, privatization, deregulation, and denationalization.⁹ Though Duterte appoints leftist cabinet members, the key departments of finance, economic development, and budget-management are run by neoliberals making woes to public social services. There is a wide gap between the budget allocated for social services and infrastructures from 2017 to 2018: in education (5.8% more), health (9.2% more), housing (68.9% less), and infrastructure (27.5% more).¹⁰ With neoliberals in key departments, it is no longer awful as the late Margaret Thatcher maintained, "They are casting their problems at society. And, you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there

⁷ GMA News Online, "Duterte declares he'll be first leftist president," April 22, 2016.

⁸ Business Mirror, "Left-Leaning Cabinet Member Slams 'Neoliberal' 2018 Budget," September 18, 2017.
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1940134964?accountid=47253> (accessed August 25, 2018).

⁹ Jewellord T. Nem, Singh, and Alvin A. Camba. "Neoliberalism, resource governance and the everyday politics of protests in the Philippines," in *The everyday political economy of Southeast Asia* ed. Juanita Elias and Lena Rethel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 49-69.

¹⁰ Department of Budget and Management, "2018 People's Budget,"
<https://www.dbm.gov.ph/index.php/budget-documents/2018/2018-people-s-budget> (accessed September 13, 2018).

Department of Budget and Management, "2017 People's Budget,"
<https://www.dbm.gov.ph/index.php/budget-documents/2017/2017-people-s-budget/2017-people-s-budget> (accessed September 13, 2018).

are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours.”¹¹ Duterte’s neoliberal policy maintains the government’s detachment from the struggling masses through a renewed and strengthened ties between the business sector and the public’s service-provider agencies. Neoliberals have always stressed their norm. Capitalists capture this principle and maintain the old slogan as the New Spirit of the Age, i.e., “Gain wealth. Forgetting all, but self.”¹² Though Duterte’s winning card is the ‘common good’ which is appealing to the general public, his government is responsible for the continuing neoliberalization of the Philippines. This has been observed in his draft of federalism and the implementation of Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law. On the former, the Duterte government explains that the shift to a federal form of government will facilitate national development and make the Philippine economy more open and competitive. That is why his cohorts justify the amending of ‘outdated’ provisions. On the contrary, it opens the economy and national patrimony to foreign control and plunder as the provisions on social justice and national sovereignty are watered down or removed. Duterte’s earlier draft of federalism says that “the state shall promote the development of a dynamic and productive economy where opportunities, income and wealth are equitably distributed.”¹³ This provision would supposedly replace Article II Section 19 of 1987 Constitution which says that “the State shall develop a self-reliant and independent national economy effectively controlled by Filipinos.” Article II Section 21 (The State shall promote comprehensive rural development and agrarian reform) of the existing Constitution would have been replaced with “the state shall promote rural development, higher agricultural productivity, and equitable land ownership

¹¹ Margaret Thatcher, interview in *Women's Own*, 1987, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-quotes> (accessed September 10, 2018).

¹² Adam Smith, cited in Noam Chomsky, “Democracy and education,” *Counterpoints* 422 (2012):55-70.

¹³ Partido Demokratiko Pilipino – Lakas ng Bayan, “Proposed Amendments to the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines: The Constitution of the Federal Republic of the Philippines,” *PDP-LABAN*, Version 1.7 as of 31 August 2017.

arrangements.” The draft of Duterte’s political party tried to remove the following terms: “industrialization and full employment based on sound agricultural development and agrarian reform” and “state protection of Filipino enterprises against unfair foreign competition and trade practices” found in the implementing Constitution’s Article XII Section 1. Under Article XII Section 2, the earlier draft attempted to remove the nationalist phrase “with Filipino citizens, or corporations or associations at least sixty per centum of whose capital is owned by such citizens. Such agreements may be for a period not exceeding twenty-five years, renewable for not more than twenty-five years,” and “reserve its use and enjoyment exclusively to Filipino citizens.” These are just few of the many diluted, if not deleted, nationalist provisions of the existing Constitution.

No leftist or socialist can make such sell out of national sovereignty and patrimony but only Duterte, chair of Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-LABAN). While the Comprehensive Agreement on Socio-Economic Reforms (CASER)¹⁴ is at stake with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines – National Democratic Front of the Philippines (GRP-NDFP)¹⁵ peace talks, Duterte’s earlier draft of federalism undermines the people’s longing for a ‘political independence’ and an ‘economic emancipation.’

¹⁴ Other three substantive agenda of the formal peace negotiations include human rights and international humanitarian law which was signed between the GRP and the NDFP on 16 March 1998 named the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), political and constitutional reforms, and end of hostilities and disposition of forces.

¹⁵ According to its International Information Office website, “The NDFP is the revolutionary united front organization of the Filipino people fighting for national freedom and for the democratic rights of the people... seeks to develop and coordinate all progressive classes, sectors and forces in the Filipino people’s struggle to end the rule of US imperialism and its local allies of big landlords and compradors, and attain national and social liberation... promoting national unity for the revolutionary struggle... makes pronouncements on behalf of the revolutionary forces upon their authorization... conducts proto-diplomatic and relations work abroad to gather moral, political and material support for the revolutionary movement.”

Democracy Under Looming Tyranny

Does Duterte have the moral ascendancy to impose his tyrannical tendency on the basis of popular democracy? He thinks so. And so, his loyalists do. But his diehard supporters tend to forget that the soundness of one's argument is not determined alone by the number of people adhering to it. As to how political foes, critics, and human rights activists are treated, Duterte's government tends to trample human rights. Duterte himself displays disdain to criticisms necessitated by democracy. Why does he display allergy to it when a truer idea can withstand criticisms? With Duterte's scheme we can hear from his own words: "Yes, it is true. I am a dictator. I have to be a dictator for the good of the country."¹⁶ He imagines himself like a Marvel superhero but overhauling the society doesn't work that way. The Filipinos have observed his interest in helping the late dictator's family gaining political power. Recent events too have much to say about his political strategy of holding to power, e.g., imprisoning staunch critics and political foes, quo warranto case against a sitting chief justice, and of course, the burial of the late dictator Marcos as a hero. That these happened must be regarded as an attack to Philippine democracy. Duterte's arrogance in interpreting human rights means nothing more than his authoritarian rule especially his views of the power-relationship between the Church and the State spawn continuous attacks even against God. Omnipotent seems to be the character of the president as shown by the early draft of his federalism. It is noted that if that draft was approved, Duterte could have been given dictator-like powers. Since during the transition period, Duterte would have become the president with powers overseeing all of government as de-facto prime minister with powers to appoint members of the interim parliament, heads of independent constitutional commissions, and the judiciary. He could have given the chance to reorganize the Courts. Even the Resolution of Both Houses No. 8 (RBH 8), in its transitory provisions, implied the dissolution of Congress and legislative powers is granted to Duterte. Moreover, the terms of the Commission On Election (COMELEC), Commission on Audit (COA), and Commission on

¹⁶ The Philippine Star, "Duterte: 'Yes, I am a dictator'," February 9, 2018.

Civil Service (CSC) officials could have been cut short and he will appoint new officials compliant to his wishes. Having colossal power like Marcos, Duterte aside from being president and commander-in-chief, could have been the de-facto prime minister with the power to appoint members of the parliament and replace members of the Constitutional Commissions and justices and judges of the reorganized Courts. Summing up, a dictatorship.¹⁷

Subservient Independent Foreign Policy

Despite Duterte's word-attack against United States, U.S. military support to the Philippines continues to pour in on top of unequal economic treaties. In 2017, Duterte's government received \$56.5 million U.S. military support for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement, International Military Education and Training, and Foreign Military Financing Program.¹⁸ The aid for fiscal year 2017 said to have reached \$180 million.¹⁹ In 2018, Duterte's government is said to have received \$119 million US aid.²⁰

During the ASEAN Summit 2017, Trump and Duterte clarified and strengthened the US-Phil ties.²¹ Significant to note was the report which says, "According to a 2017 report of the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the US goods trade deficit with the Philippines was \$1.8 billion in 2016. The US goods

¹⁷ Partido Demokratiko Pilipino – Lakas ng Bayan, "Proposed Amendments to the 1987 Constitution.

¹⁸ Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill 2017, 114th Congress.

¹⁹ Jose Katigbak, "US to provide \$180-M aid to Philippines next year," *The Philippine Star*, October 8, 2016.

²⁰ Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill 2018, 115th Congress.

²¹ Oliver Holmes, "Trump hails 'great relationship' with Philippines' Duterte," *The Guardian*, November 13, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/13/trump-hails-great-relationship-with-philippines-duterte> (accessed September 8, 2018).

Raju Gopalakrishnan, "You are the light - Philippines' Duterte croons at Trump's request," *Reuters*, November 13, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asean-summit-song/you-are-the-light-philippines-duterte-croons-at-trumps-request-idUSKBN1DD04O> (accessed September 8, 2018).

exports to the Philippines amounted to \$8.3 billion while the corresponding imports from the Philippines were worth \$10 billion.”²² The United States may seem critical to Duterte regime’s human rights violation but in reality the U.S. government is funding Duterte’s war on drugs and the Armed Forces of the Philippine’s Development and Security Plan 2017-2018 named Oplan Kapayapaan.²³ For the activists, environmentalists, human rights defenders, and advocates, this means espionage, harassments, abductions, tortures, and extrajudicial killings. The AFP is serving the interests of foreign capital. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) former Secretary Gina Lopez divulged that the military is acting as bodyguard for mining companies.²⁴ On this account, one needs not to wonder as to why there is militarization in the countryside. Militarization is going hand in hand with foreign economic interest. According to the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines, “The United States is working closely with the Philippine government on future Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) projects at five locations: Cesar Basa Air Base, Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation, Lumbia Air Base, Antonio Bautista Air Base, and Mactan Benito Ebuen Air Base.”²⁵ Despite Duterte’s harsh words on the United States, Lorenzana clarifies that the Philippines will respect the US-PH agreement.²⁶ In so doing, Duterte’s regime issued the National

²² Trisha Macas, “Duterte raises US-PHL free trade agreement in bilateral meeting with Trump,” *GMA News Online*, November 13, 2017. <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/money/economy/632971/duterte-raises-us-phl-free-trade-agreement-in-bilateral-meeting-with-trump/story/> (accessed September 8, 2018).

²³ Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill 2017, 114th Congress.

Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill 2018, 115th Congress.

²⁴ Armando B. Fenequito Jr., “Stop using soldiers to guard mining firms: Lopez,” *MindaNation*, August 5, 2016. <http://mindanation.com/stop-using-soldiers-guard-mining-firms-lopez/> (accessed September 3, 2018).

²⁵ U.S. Embassy Manila, “Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement Groundbreaking Ceremony,” April 17, 2018. <https://ph.usembassy.gov/enhanced-defense-cooperation-agreement-groundbreaking-ceremony/> (accessed September 7, 2018).

²⁶ Pia Lee-Brago, “US, Philippines affirm commitment to Mutual Defense Treaty,” *The Philippine Star*, September 24, 2018.

Security Policy 2017-2022 referring to the U.S. as its “sole defense treaty ally” which affirms the Washington’s Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (OPE-P).²⁷ The Philippines is indeed under the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).²⁸ No wonder that the military operation in Marawi was aided, if not directed, by U.S. soldiers and according to an army captain serving as spokesperson for the Task Force Marawi, most of the arms used by the Maute came from the government itself.²⁹ In 2016, the United States gave military equipment to the Philippines. Also, on 05 June 2017, the United States delivered weapons to the Armed Forces of the Philippines at Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) in Taguig. According to the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines, “The weapons and equipment include 300 M4 carbines, 200 Glock 21 pistols, 4 M134D Gatling-style machine guns, and 100 M203 grenade launchers delivered May 18-22 to Clark Air Base. JUSMAG also delivered 25 new Combat Rubber Raiding Craft (CRRC) with outboard motors May 30 to PMC Headquarters.”³⁰ This was made possible through the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) which exists beginning from 1947 and it encompasses the Philippine National Police –Special Action Force,

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/09/24/1854160/us-philippines-affirm-commitment-mutual-defense-treaty> (accessed September 26, 2018).

²⁷ National Security Council, “2017-2022 National Security Policy for Change and Well-being of the Filipino People,” NSC, April 2017. <http://www.nsc.gov.ph/attachments/article/NSP/NSP-2017-2022.pdf> (accessed September 4, 2018).

Elliott Gabriel, “Operation Pacific Eagle in the Philippines: Washington’s New Colonial War,” *MintPress News*, February 09, 2018. <https://www.mintpressnews.com/operation-pacific-eagle-in-the-philippines-washingtons-new-colonial-war/237281/> (accessed May 11, 2018).

²⁸ Dana Priest, “‘Top Secret America’: A look at the military’s Joint Special Operations Command,” *The Washington Post*, September 2, 2011. <http://act4entertainment.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Top-Secret-America-A-look-at-the-military%E2%80%99s-Joint-Special-Operations-Command-The-Washington-Post.pdf> (accessed November 30, 2017).

²⁹ Philippine Daily Inquirer, “Militants fighting in Marawi using gov’t-owned guns, says Army exec,” *PDI*, September 15, 2017

³⁰ U.S. Embassy Manila, “U.S. Military Presents New Weapons and Equipment to Philippine Marine Corps Commandant for Counterterror Fight,” June 5, 2017. <https://ph.usembassy.gov/us-military-presents-new-weapons-equipment-philippine-marine-corps-commandant-counterterror-fight/> (accessed September 7, 2018).

the Philippine Coast Guard, and the Philippine Marine Special Operations Group.

As Duterte started lambasting the United States many may have thought that this era of Philippine politics is independent from foreign influence, but political independence is not evaluated through the words spoken by the president but through the policies signed with its former colonial master. It is the implementation of policies that best describes the independence of foreign policy. U.S. Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill 2017 and 2018 reflect multimillion-dollar aid to Duterte's regime. With Duterte's subservience to the U.S. while courting China and Russia, more and more reasons compel the Filipino people to pursue 'political independence' and 'economic emancipation.' Duterte's independent foreign policy still raises underlying question: Is it independent? Or in(dependent)?

The Place of Rousseau in Duterte's Democracy

The founding of cause-oriented groups against tyranny sprouts within the first year of Duterte's presidency. The imprisonment of political opponents, critics, and activists produces a nightmare resounding the Marcos era. Of course, traditional politicians do not point out the need to re-examine the country's democracy and transform its representative form to being participatory, but it is needed in a country suffering from foreign influence, land monopoly, and elite politics. If it is not participatory, then, it is not emancipatory. Even with the presidency of Duterte, Philippine politics is still characterized by patronage system. This is evident how pork barrel was attempted to be integrated in an earlier version of federalism³¹ and in 2019 Annual Budget.³² In December 2017, Duterte's TRAIN Law was approved by the Congress without quorum. His earlier draft of federalism was tainted by dubious provisions, e.g., term

³¹ Partido Demokratiko Pilipino – Lakas ng Bayan, "Proposed Amendments to the 1987 Constitution.

³² Altermidya, "Pork and cuts: Duterte admin 'whips same old recipe' for proposed 2019 budget," September 19, 2018. <http://altermidya.net/pork-and-cuts-2019-national-budget/> (Accessed September 21, 2018).

extension, and less government checks-and-balances. He has proven himself allergic to criticisms implying people not to become militant progressive. Rather, his pronouncements tell us to remain providential leaving the future to God and to the authority. But Jean Jacques Rousseau says otherwise:

The Sovereign may commit the charge of the government to the whole people or to the majority of the people, so that more citizens are magistrates than are mere private individuals. This form of government is called democracy.³³

Or it may restrict the government to a small number, so that there are more private citizens than magistrates; and this is named aristocracy.³⁴

For democracy may include the whole people, or may be restricted to half. Aristocracy, in its turn, may be restricted indefinitely from half the people down to the smallest possible number.³⁵

The Philippine legislative body is still dominated by traditional (elite) politicians without mass-base. Even the party-list system, supposedly to empower organized individuals, is hijacked by bureaucrat capitalists. In Congress, there are very few lawmakers founding their political strength on mass organizations. The Filipinos saw in Duterte new politics with new politicians but Duterte himself allied with the Marcoses, former presidents Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Joseph Ejercito Estrada, lawmakers tainted with corruption, and local politician-warlords. In this way, Duterte projects himself the warlord of warlords displacing the masses from his government. While projecting himself as mass-oriented, he displays the same characteristic other politician-warlords possess. This was evident when a mother from the City of Naga went into hiding after she refuted Duterte's statement on the landslide tragedy caused by a

³³ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* Trans. by G. D. H. Cole. 1762. p.50. https://www.ucc.ie/archive/hdsp/Rousseau_contrat-social.pdf (accessed September 2, 2018).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

multinational cement company. The citizen's suggestion to stop the quarry was applauded by her fellow citizens who probably think that the tragedy could have been avoided if the masses are empowered as the lawmakers are to institute reforms. Though Rousseau reiterates, "He who makes the law knows better than anyone else how it should be executed and interpreted,"³⁶ but in a country where business interest weighs heavier than the people's welfare, we are once reminded of bogus democracy.

It is not good for him who makes the laws to execute them, or for the body of the people to turn its attention away from a general standpoint and devote it to particular objects. Nothing is more dangerous than the influence of private interests in public affairs, and the abuse of the laws by the government is a less evil than the corruption of the legislator, which is the inevitable sequel to a particular standpoint.³⁷

In a university forum, a former lawmaker admitted that money works at Congress. Addressing this problem, Filipinos should deal with its root cause. Since the problem is systematized, then it should be dealt with systematically. First, apply Hegel's law of transformation, that is, change in quality is attained through change in quantity. The citizens can never be empowered and mobilized if they are not organized. Only then that the citizens can deal with the implementing policy pushed by the global capital's driving ideology, i.e., neoliberalism. Neoliberalism does not liberate. And so, it has to be confronted by the masses since it enslaves our minds as it controls our nation's natural resources. Its package policy is anti-poor and never looks into the common good. With this macro-economic policy, it's the invisible hand of self-interest running the free-market enterprise. In so doing, it's not only the country's policies changed but our mentality to conform to theirs making human life a commodity by placing profit first over the society's welfare. But Rousseau says the contrary:

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

If we take the term in the strict sense, there never has been a real democracy, and there never will be. It is against the natural order for the many to govern and the few to be governed. It is unimaginable that the people should remain continually assembled to devote their time to public affairs, and it is clear that they cannot set up commissions for that purpose without the form of administration being changed.³⁸

In this case, Rousseau talked only in context of his time and place. Today's political atmosphere in the Philippines, the citizens are taking the risk working above and underground establishing an alternative government. Also, there are one hundred ten guerrilla zones and seventy-three provinces where the reaffirmist Left operates.³⁹

One of the possible reasons, as to how and why more people feel the distance of the government from its citizens is the people's own experience of exploitation, oppression, and marginalization. Under Duterte's regime with anti-poor policy like the regressive taxation of TRAIN Law, the masses are badly hit. Despite having representatives, the organized masses are not really heard in the legislation since out of more than two hundred, there are only less than ten lawmakers with mass-base. The problem, however, is also with Filipino people bearing providential philosophy of history making themselves apathetic to determine and pre-empt the consequence of relying much to the authority. Under bureaucrat capitalism, the government is run like a business enterprise with elite politicians ruling. If only the people are organized, they can mobilize to deal with the loopholes of representative democracy and transform it into participatory. But Duterte's presidency creates a people disliking mass mobilization. Those who organize themselves run the risk of being Red-tagged. If the Filipinos don't push for participatory

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.52.

³⁹ Jose Maria Sison, "Great Achievements of the CPP in 50 years of waging revolution," *NDFP International Information Office*, August 22, 2018. <https://www.ndfp.org/great-achievements-of-the-cpp-in-50-years-of-waging-revolution/> (accessed August 23, 2018).

democracy, they should ask if representative democracy of the country is efficient. Does it really suffice? Rousseau elucidates:

The more numerous the public administration, the smaller becomes the relation between the prince and the subjects, and the nearer it comes to equality, so that in democracy the ratio is unity, or absolute equality. Again, as the government is restricted in numbers the ratio increases and reaches its maximum when the government is in the hands of a single person. There is then too great a distance between prince and people, and the State lacks a bond of union.⁴⁰

There is still a wide gap between the Philippine society's upper and lower class. This is evident today as the masses start complaining against the pro-rich TRAIN Law. Duterte, however, said that he is the Filipinos' last card. But Rousseau warns:

If, however, it is hard for a great State to be well governed, it is much harder for it to be so by a single man; and everyone knows what happens when kings substitute others for themselves.⁴¹

As the prospect of an authoritarian leader becomes popular, the anti-tyranny cause-oriented groups have to be strengthened and united.

Conclusion

Neoliberal policies are continuously implemented despite having a president who has proclaimed himself leftist and socialist. Lifting the Filipinos' standards-of-living is still skirting while the country's richness does not enrich the masses. Putting the economy on the right track means to counter the neoliberal path.

With the Congress' supermajority adhering to Duterte's wish and a Chief Justice aligned to the Executive, is the Constitution

⁴⁰ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, p.57.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

upheld? Or the President's wish? Tyranny is thus lurking in Philippine democracy. The fact of the matter while the government of Duterte attempted to encroach authoritarian machinery in a subtle way, the people had managed to compel revisions and sufficient study and participation to show sincerity in constitutional amendment for development. Consequently, Duterte's regime was marked with power-thirsty character wavering from Left to Right and to Ultra-Right. Within a year, the government begins to alienate the militant progressive mass organizations but the effort remains futile as the people continues to surge against another Marcos in the making. While such a plan may have been feasible at the time developing countries were trying to lose from the grip of their former colonial master, today's political atmosphere is untimely for another authoritarian rule. Putting the country under one-man rule will depend on the people's consent. In other words, Duterte has to prove himself that he is indeed the Filipinos last card. However, his affinity with the military and police gives him political relief but not stability for radical factions in the State's forces may have different orientation. Thus, it is understandable as to how and why a sitting president should not make the police and the military disgruntled. The response of the people to Duterte's authoritarian leaning rule demonstrates that it's the masses' mobilization as the ultimate performer in the political arena.

Duterte may appear threatening on the United States but his tough words are as accommodating as his subservience to American intervention in the country. Duterte may recourse to the ways of his idol Marcos in instituting legitimacy to his caprice as preventing the growth of communism. But then there is growing repudiation of his paradoxical independent foreign policy. With elite politics dominating the country, there is a pressing need for transforming Philippine representative democracy to being participatory. Only then that Philippine politics may become empowering and emancipatory. Accordingly, Duterte's new politics maintain, if not worsen, the socio-politico economic problems he inherits from the preceding presidents.

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